

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 DHA-02 OMB-01
CU-02 SIL-01 LAB-04 MCT-01 /080 W
-----132252Z 112736 /62

P R 132122Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1516
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PFOR, PORG, ECON
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE TODMAN VISITED BOGOTA THIS WEEK FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER. LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL TURBAY LAUNCHED HIS OFFICIAL CANDIDACY WITH A LARGE RALLY IN BOGOTA. VIOLENCE ON THE CAMPUS OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA CONTINUED AND THE RECTOR RESIGNED. RIOTING IN THE SMALL CITY OF LA CEJA LED TO A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF SHOOTING AND LEFT AT LEAST 13 PERSONS INJURED.

2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN COMPLETES SUCCESSFUL VISIT. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS TERENCE TODMAN VISITED BOGOTA MAY 8-10. HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FONMIN LIEVANO INCLUDED ISSUES SUCH AS BILATERAL TRADE, HUMAN RIGHTS, THE PANAMA CANAL
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NEGOTIATIONS, AND RELATIONS WITH CUBA. (BOGOTA 4246 AND 4247).

3. TURBAY LAUNCHES HIS CANDIDACY, FINALLY. PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA FORMALLY LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGN FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION ON MAY 7 WITH A GALA EVENT IN BOGOTA (SEE BOGOTA 4325). IN A LONG, CIRCUS-LIKE PROGRAM, TURBAY WAS ACCLAIMED AS

THE "POPULAR CANDIDATE OF THE PEOPLE," A TITLE WHICH HE HOPES WILL HELP TO GUARANTEE HIS EVENTUAL VICTORY. IN GENERAL, TURBAY SIMPLY REITERATED HIS FAITH IN THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT, AND GAVE NO HINTS OF DEVELOPING POLICIES WHICH MIGHT BE DISTINCTIVELY HIS OWN. IN FACT, MUCH OF HIS SPEECH WAS A RE-HASH OF THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENT SPLIT WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY, AND A DEFENSE OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. THE CEREMONY RECEIVED LUKE-ARM EDITORIAL COVERAGE FROM THE LIBERAL PRESS, WITH EL ESPECTADOR COMING OUT AGAINST TURBAY AND WITH EL TIEMPO PREFERRING TO REMAIN NEUTRAL A BIT LONGER. TURBAY WILL NOW TAKE A 30-DAY BREAK IN HIS CAMPAIGNING IN ORDER TO PRIVATELY VISIT THE US AND COSTA RICA, THE LATTER VISIT HAVING ALL THE TRAPPINGS OF A STATE VISIT. MEANWHILE THE OTHER TWO LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATES, EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO AND FORMER MINISTER HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA, CONTINUE THEIR QUESTS FOR SUPPORTERS WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY RANKS. BOTH HAVE TERMED TURBAY'S CEREMONY AS HAVING ONLY "SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE" SINCE THE PARTY'S NOMINATING CONVENTION IS STILL SET FOR FEBRUARY OF NEXT YEAR.

4. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS CONTINUE STRIKES; RECTOR RESIGNS THE HIGHLY RADICALIZED NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA, WITH AN ENROLLMENT OF NEARLY 20,000 STUDENTS, REMAINED CLOSED AS STRIKE-RELATED VIOLENCE THERE MOUNTED. GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES WERE STATIONED ON CAMPUS IN AN EFFORT TO STEM FURTHER VIOLENT OUTBURSTS. UNIVERSITY RECTOR OSMAR CORREAL, CLAIMING THAT HE LACKED AUTHORITY TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONTROL THE SITUATION, RESIGNED AFTER HE WAS BESIEGED IN HIS OFFICE BY A MOB OF STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY BLUE-COLLAR EMPLOYEES. THE WORKERS' DEMANDS FOR GREATER ECONOMIC BENEFITS HAVE BEEN TAKEN UP BY THE STRIKING STUDENTS. AT BOGOTA'S PRIVATE, GENERALLY SEDATE UNIVERSITY OF THE ANDES, STUDENTS ALSO REMAIN ON STRIKE, THOUGH THEIR ACTIONS SO FAR HAVE BEEN PEACEFUL. MAJOR ISSUES THERE INCLUDE DISAGREEMENT OVER CLASS CURRICULAE, THE FIRING OF TWO POPULAR PROFESSORS, AND A PROPOSED TUITION INCREASE. POLICE PATROLS AROUND SANTIAGO UNIVERSITY IN CALI WERE INCREASED FOLLOWING THREE MINOR BOMBINGS OF UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS. NO MOTIVE FOR THE VIOLENCE HAS YET BEEN DETERMINED.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. AT LEAST 13 PERSONS WERE INJURED. SEVEN OF THEM WITH BULLET WOUNDS, IN THE CITY OF LA CEJA IN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT WHEN A MAY 13 PROTEST MARCH BY THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS DEMANDING IMPROVED EDUCATION TURNED SUDDENLY VIOLENT. POLICE REINFORCE-

MENTS WERE IMMEDIATELY DISPATCHED TO THE CITY OF APPROXIMATELY 60,000 INHABITANTS AND THEY EVENTUALLY BROUGHT THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. ALSO IN ANTIOQUIA, IN WHAT HAS BECOME ALMOST A ROUTINE INCIDENT, FARC GUERRILLAS SEIZED A SMALL TOWN AT DAWN AND LOOTED IT OF MEDICINE, FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES. THE VISIT BY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO POPAYAN, THE CAPITAL OF CAUCA DEPARTMENT, WAS MARKED BY THE BOMBING BY UNIDENTIFIED TERRORISTS OF THE BUILDING HOUSING THE COLOMBO-FRENCH ALLIANCE. IN CONTRAST, BOGOTA WAS RELATIVELY FREE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE THIS WEEK, THE CONTINUED CLOSURE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS PRESUMABLY CONTRIBUTING TO THE CALM. TWO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, WHO HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF FORMER LABOR MINISTER MARIA ELENA DE CROVO IN LATE APRIL, WERE CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO LONG PRISON TERMS BY A BOGOTA MILITARY COURT THIS WEEK AFTER AN UNUSUALLY RAPID LEGAL PROCESS.

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Message Attributes

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